

**COOPERATIVE LABOR/MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS  
A KEY TO SUCCESS**

**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Executive Leadership requires a combination of skills be employed to help develop a successful leader. One such required skill is the ability to study trends in the business world and envision a practical use for that trend in a leader's organization. One of the latest managerial trends in today's workplace is the successful implementation of cooperative labor/management partnerships in service delivery. Employing all of the vast resources employed by an organization has led to improved service delivery in many public sector organizations.

Private sector organizations have learned through the use of total quality and team participatory management --which was driven with the desire to improve customer service through the provision of a better final product-- that employees' empowerment is essential. Public sector unions such as American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and National Education Association have learned through the necessity of improving their ability to provide their services that quality and team management is essential. It is important to determine if the fire service has recognized the need to implement this management change.

In an attempt to provide fire service leaders with an understanding of this trend, to discover if it has found a use in the fire service and to demonstrate its benefit to the service, this paper used an evaluative research methodology which included a nine-question nationwide survey to determine current trends in fire service cooperative labor/management. The following

questions were used to analyze this trend and its effects on the fire service:

1. What is cooperative labor/management and why is it a growing trend?
2. Is cooperative labor/management being used in the fire service?
3. Would cooperative partnerships be a benefit to the fire service?

Most data was obtained through the use of recently published periodicals and government reports. The survey results demonstrated a partial use of cooperative partnerships. Also obtained through the readings were sites of many working examples in both public and private sector organizations. The literature and study results provide examples of many benefits to the fire services that use cooperative teams.

In preparing for the future, it is essential that today's fire service leaders improve how they provide their service to their customers. Cooperative labor/management partnerships provide a system that empowers all employees thereby enriching an organization's resource pool. To be competitive in today's service delivery, market managers must tap all company resources which includes all of their employees. Cooperative labor/management partnerships develop an organizational system to build a team oriented organization that will be able to compete in the future.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Labor relations in the fire service have involved strong-minded individuals with agendas that usually separated labor and management into a divided organization. Each side would take a position that seemed to be completely opposite from the other with little or no middle ground. There was a division that created a “blue shirts” versus “white shirts” mentality. Greater divisions and adversarial relationships were created with this philosophy when there were budgetary constraints requiring reductions and service changes.

Private sector organizations have learned through the use of total quality and team participatory management --which was driven with the desire to improve customer service through the provision of a better final product-- that employee empowerment is essential. Public sector unions such as American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and National Education Association have learned through the necessity of improving their ability to provide their services that quality and team management is essential. It is important to determine if the fire service has recognized the need to implement this management change.

In an attempt to provide fire service leaders with an understanding of this trend to discover if it has found a use in the fire service and to demonstrate its benefit to the service this paper used an evaluative research methodology which included a nine-question nationwide survey to determine current trends in fire service cooperative labor/management. The following questions were used to analyze this trend and its effects on the fire service:

1. What is cooperative labor/management and why is it a growing trend?
2. Is cooperative labor/management being used in the fire service?
3. Would cooperative partnerships be a benefit to the fire service?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Meeting the demands of providing quality service with decreasing funding is a challenge that requires innovative management. Cooperative labor/management is a philosophy that demands participation of all employees in a collaboration of skills and knowledge sharing to produce the best services and products for both internal and external customers. Employee empowerment is a well-used term that really means involving everyone in the organization in every aspect of service delivery through open communication, trust and decision making authority.

The paramilitary belief that the fire service was developed under has long outlived its usefulness. The military has changed its management style when it was required to provide a more cost efficient service. The fire service is rapidly being required to operate as a business and consider how the end product is delivered and at what cost. Cooperative labor/management has become a tool used by private and public sector organizations to improve its product and services. It is time the fire service

follows this management style and considers itself as a business that is required to efficiently deliver a high quality service, as cost effective as possible.

Changing the leadership style of an organization is a task that requires a well developed plan. The Executive Leadership program provided a basis to start development of managing change. This research project is designed to provide additional examples and justifications to help initiate change with a focus on involving all the employees in the organization.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A new era of labor-management relations is emerging as we draw closer to the 21st century. Based on experiences at innovative work places in both the public and private sectors, many managers, workers, and their unions are scrapping the traditional adversarial way of doing business and opting for a more innovative and civilized way of working together through labor-management cooperative efforts. They are looking at and experimenting with new ways to create high performance workplaces where employees and their unions are involved in finding solutions to a range of problems and improving the workplaces, services and products.

This works because it has been proven that workers know more about their jobs than anyone else. These employees, when given the opportunity and encouragement, are willing and eager to

contribute ideas for making their jobs more productive. “A model to achieve high performance workplaces has three basic principles: (1) satisfaction of citizens, (2) to seek continuous and long-term improvement in all organization’s processes and products, and (3) totally involve employees and their unions in the process of change ( AFL-CIO, 1994, p.1).”

Businesses have found that cooperative labor/management has improved their ability to compete in the global economy. They note that they must stop viewing their labor and management as an adversarial relationship.

“Life in the American workplace is changing. Industries are caught up in a whirlwind of experiments with employee involvement, problem-solving teams, autonomous work groups, and participative management. Along the way, worker empowerment has become part of the lexicon of some of America’s toughest CEOs (Bender, Leone, 1994, p138 ).”

Cooperative labor/management is developing a standard operating procedure that requires alliances between groups that had limited interest in cooperation in the past. Joint ventures are now developed that require all participants to view each other as partners. “Community policing is helping to build bridges among groups that have been adversaries in the past (Linden, 1995, p 67).”

Organizations are learning to work in a seamless environment, developing cross-functional teams to replace isolated departments and functions. This system shifts the importance from internal activities to outcomes. Delivery of the service at an efficient level is stressed.

“An examination of unfolding developments points to what may be termed the creation of a three-tracked system of labor-management relations (Bender, Leone, 1994, p 143).” These tracks are described as follows:

Track I, traditional labor contracts

Track II, employee involvement in decision making process.

Track III, joint union-management committees

Organizations are continuing to operate in each environment; some may implement all three while others are moving toward primary use of just one. It is dependent on the organization's concern with outcomes as to whether they are moving away from Track I toward Track II or III. As an example, the City of Berkeley, California has implemented Track III as a proactive attempt to prevent layoffs. They established three labor-management committees that have budget oversight, a core group to work on non bargaining issues and a Total Quality Management group. These three teams worked together in 1992-1993 budget year to prevent 85 layoffs with more than 200 pages of suggestions from the employees on how to improve the organization cooperatively.

A better way to understand what cooperative labor/management is, is to think of it as a voluntary process of labor and management working together with common goals of anticipating and resolving mutual problems and improving their day to day working relationship. This relationship is a better way for government organizations to meet their obligations using public worker knowledge from every level and replacing the traditional methods of service delivery, personnel and administrative systems, styles of supervision and communication, and collective bargaining approaches. This also

lowers the confrontational methods of operating and requires all personnel from elected officials, managers and union leaders, to focus on common tasks. Using employee participation from the bottom to the top enforces the beliefs that cooperative labor management can work.

Today's society is more concerned about the level of service they receive and if the service's costs are justified. Cooperative labor/management is a system that works to provide better service through speed of delivery, expanded scope and improved responsiveness to customers. It promotes cost effectiveness through money being better spent and a better quality of life for the employee with improved involvement, opportunities to learn, and job security. It also reduces conflicts, allows for flexibility in contracts and emphasizes mutual responsibilities for service improvements. Understanding what cooperative labor/management is and how it affects all involved, is a start to understanding why it is needed.

A question in HR Focus asks John T. Dunlop, former Secretary of Labor, "is it possible that labor and management could get along better?" His response starts the understanding on why we need cooperative labor/management.

"First, management and union-labor relations in the United States are significantly more hostile than in any other Western country. Second, I do think that it is possible to build a much more cooperative relationship that supports what we are trying to do in the workplace (Yarborough, 1994, p.23)."

His view is from an experience position that we may perceive but do not fully understand. Former

New Jersey Governor Florio, while working as a co-chair of the Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government through Labor-Management Cooperation, listed several areas that the committee would look at. The two most important were dealing with collective bargaining and dispute resolution.

Cooperation is needed to develop a system that brings the notion of customers into the public sector including customers both internal and external to an organization. The people who receive services provided and the customers of other public-sector agencies, divisions, departments and co-workers. These cooperations can and should be established through the use of Quality Services and Total Quality Management concepts. Traditional management paradigms such as the thinking of union and management officials that their most important job is to control the other must be replaced. This needs to be shifted to a sense of partnership with labor and management over strategic direction of the organization. Japanese management developed a paradigm that lists several key points required to be successful in today's cooperative environment.

- Management should rely on wisdom of the people at the bottom of the organization
- Motivation and commitment of the majority are more important than the motivation and commitment of a few.
- Information should be shared among the members of the organization.
- Employees are active participants in the organization and they should, therefore, share its fruits.

These points are not for the private sector only. They have found successes there but must be also considered in the public sector.

“No one knows better than frontline public workers how government bureaucracies can get in the way of providing the public with good, efficient services. Outdated rules and regulations, bloated administration, multiple and poorly coordinated programs and top-down reform efforts that fail to address the real problems or never reach the worksite are just some of the problems that public employees encounter as they try to provide effective services (AFL-CIO 1994, p. 13).”

The current environment places public employees in a difficult position. They are often inaccurately portrayed as the problem that needs to be cut. Yet nobody is more frustrated with bureaucratic inefficiencies than front-line workers who know how to improve the delivery of public services and the work they do for the community.

“The most profound insight of the past few years for many public-and private-sector leaders is that their primary limitations lie instead in the ways they have organized work. The principles on which we have built our major government and business organizations produce a highly fragmented organization, keyed to separation between departments, separation of line and staff, separation from its consumers, separation from suppliers and vendors (Linden, 1995 p.68).”

Seamless government agencies are putting the pieces back together and learning to organize in a holistic way.

Unions have to be completely involved from the start and continue through the process. They must involve their entire membership. “The individuals themselves have got to be involved with any change that takes place (Bonner 1996, p.15).” Without their involvement, employees will not accept

these changes deeming them to failure. One problem, especially in the fire service, is that union members are more likely to wait until a crisis before they realize there is a need to get involved. Additionally, union leaders moving in this direction are not supported by their membership because they feel that management is not sincere. They must look beyond that thinking and consider that this is an opportunity to gain control of their future.

To properly gain control employees must shift their focus from only the activities they perform to controlling the results of their actions. Those who work together can't control the results of their work when they are not organized for results. If they organize around outcomes they will find that they can control the results far more than they ever imagined. This cooperative participation empowers the employee, placing them in a work environment conducive to employee growth and satisfaction. It cannot work without the cooperation from managers and trust from the work force.

Managers need to be enablers, coaches or advisors, mentors and not commanders. Today's managers need to change their thinking on how processes should be developed and used. They must involve the shop floor workforce in the creative end of the business, to draw on both their heads and their hands and learn to trust them as human beings, not merely as input to the production process. This leads to organizations that are flatter. Managers must provide their employees with the necessary training and tools, then remove themselves from the process letting the people do the work.

“Employees in these kinds of organizations are turned on to the work, this is a momentous cultural change for both labor and management (Bonner, 1996, p.22).” Workers, whether they are managers

or on the front line want to be directly involved in the decisions that affect their jobs and enable them to reap the benefits of the organizations. “Given encouragement and opportunity, employees are willing and eager to contribute ideas to make their jobs more interesting and more productive (Bonner, 1996, p 2).” This environment can lead to a high performance workplace.

There are three basic principles required to develop a high performance workplace: satisfaction of citizens, constantly seek continuous long term improvement in all the organization’s processes and products, and totally involve employees and their unions in the process of change. Management and unions must continually work together to develop a cooperation and involvement of everyone. They must encourage innovation in all aspects of the process and create a shared vision of what the organization can become and how to get there. “From the school house to the fire house, a growing number of state and local governments are forming cooperative workplace partnerships in an effort to transform their public agencies to customer-responsive organizations better equipped to serve citizens (United States Government, 1996, p. 13).”

Educational systems have proven to be a breeding ground for this type of radical change. Change cannot be mandated from the top down and be successful in education. A two-step process has been used to create this system. First, the professionalism of educators and staff is upgraded. Second, authority is shifted down to the school site where learning occurs and into the hands closest to the students. “This process, called school-based management/shared decision making, has been embraced by unions of teachers and school staff, and by almost every educational commission reporting

in recent years (AFL-CIO, 1994, p.13).”

The fire service has learned, on a limited basis, that it often makes economic sense to organize public services on a metropolitan basis, fire fighting is one of these services. Suburban homes are often located closer to a neighboring town’s fire station than one of their own. Recognizing these advantages, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 439 in Phoenix, Arizona worked with city administration to set up metropolitan fire fighting structures. It includes the city of Phoenix and almost all the surrounding jurisdictions. There is a joint command structure and a common training system. The departments involved use joint purchasing and dispatching realizing economy of scales in these areas saving their organizations money. The single dispatch center allows for closest unit response to a call no matter the jurisdictional boundaries. “The result has been millions of dollars in savings and upgraded insurance ratings for all cities (AFL-CIO, 1994, p. 39).”

Phoenix’s fire department successfully bid against a consortium of seven ambulance companies for transportation services. They have lowered the response time and cost of service to the public. These enhancements have been recognized by *Fortune* magazine which noted that this could not have been accomplished without extensive employee involvement.

Phoenix is one example; Burlington, Vermont is another. If management is not willing to treat labor as a partner in negotiating and governing, it is virtually impossible to make progress on any collaborative venture, at the negotiating table or in the workplace. Labor relations had been so bad in

that town that they once threw the Mayor out of the fire station. They received a grant from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to review the environment in which they worked. Their analysis developed common ground and created a cooperative work team between the fire fighters and the mayor. Through two years of growth, trust developed and a good working relationship was established. This was short lived. The mayor's office changed hands through the election process. The new mayor did not understand the process. "They rebuilt the stone wall and we rebuilt ours, so rather than sit down and talk during negotiations they fought over everything stated union president Michael O'Neil in an article in *Governing*. "Each wound up spending thousands of dollars in legal fees and accomplishing nothing."

Saturn is perhaps the most dramatic example of labor/management innovation. It is a working, vibrant operation with approximately 6,500 employees who participate in every aspect of operating the plant. They have designed a favorable work environment both inside and outside of the plant. They treat their customers both internal (workers) and external (car buyers) as the most important assets of the organization. They used a strategy that recognized that the union and the company had numerous shared interests and it encouraged the formation of partnerships. This is a major change in corporate thinking. It has always been important to treat the customer favorably, now it has been discovered that treating employees is just as important. The product of this change is an external customer with higher satisfaction levels and internal customers rejuvenated by their increased participation in product and service delivery.

Employees are now empowered and supplied with all the knowledge and skills required to

make participatory decisions as compared to top-down tightly controlled management. Work is organized in teams with traditional organizational lines cut and managers working as coaches instead of functional departments with defined boundaries, narrow scope and limited responsibilities. Workers are viewed as assets with a culture that supports that belief especially involving employee needs at work and at home where,, in the past, cost was the most important issue in an impersonal anti sensitive culture. There is now a continuous striving for innovation and improvement in the quality and timeliness of services as compared to sequential innovations which rarely occurred and were never shared between departments. Finally, quality and customer needs are the major drivers of change with zero defects as a goal while quality is continuously being measured by all involved, where nominal defect rates were accepted and quality inspections were only done on the final product. This new workplace requires employee participation from start to finish. It demands all involved to change their thinking from traditional management and create a process for addressing problems cooperatively so services may meet today's needs.

There are three elements developed through team building that make it successful.

“It is a philosophy that espouses mutuality of interest in the operation of an organization in accordance with the values of a democratic society. It is an attitude that values and nurtures an open climate conducive to mutual sharing of information and the building of trust. It is a process that provides a vehicle for participation in problem solving and decision making to improve the effectiveness of an organization and enhance the quality of work life (AFL-CIO, 1994, p. 2).”

From these three elements, many positives can develop to support this environment. Employment security is secure when members are assured they will not be adversely affected when initiating change. Management and unions become full and equal partners in the change effort and daily operations. Information is willingly shared through open communication. Power is shared through the organization with power delegated down. Members become committed through their involvement. Patience for change is developed as all members become understanding of the process and its long term objectives.

Commitment to this process will create high performance workplaces. These workplaces will effectively use all organizational resources, develop concern for the quality of products and services, develop non authoritarian management styles, increase the use of leading edge technology which will expand the skill, knowledge and insights of personnel. It will also create an independent source of power for workers that protects employee interests in the workplace.

Where cooperative labor/management in public safety has been implemented, improvements have been made in the following areas as noted in *Working Together for Public Service*, a report of the U. S. Secretary of Labor's Office.

- More services to community with same workforce
- More responsive to neighborhood
- More crime and fire prevention activity
- Shared resources & talents for specific needs
- Increased coverage to problem areas

- Reduction in incidents
- Better vehicle investments for effectiveness
- Better costing/charge back for special events
- More equitable pay system
- Less confrontational bargaining

These types of improvements can only be accomplished when organizations learn how to communicate with each other, value and involve all levels of employees, work as a team and work collaboratively.

“A new generation of public sector union leaders seem just as capable of playing hardball, certainly, but they are much less interested in engaging in the same old games. It does not stop them from still getting mad but instead of trying to get even they are getting creative; instead of being purely reactive, they are getting more active, shaping new initiatives rather than simply fighting the system (Walters, 1994, p.44).”

## **Summary**

This literature review defines cooperative labor/management and examines why it is successful and expanding in private and public sector organizations. It lists and explains the benefits to fire service organizations who implement the strategy. This review was only able to site two examples of fire

service use of this style of management through the readings. To further examine fire service use, analysis of the survey data is required.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Instrument**

There was very little textual material available on this subject. It has been well published in periodical literature and government reports, so all references were of this type. They were timely in nature with actual studies and surveys of working systems as resources.

A nine-part questionnaire was developed and used to determine if the fire service is using cooperative labor/management philosophies and if they are, in what management areas is it used. It also studied these trends based on size of organizations and their location in the United States.

### **Population**

A nationwide sampling of 120 fire departments was conducted by mail. The survey sample was constructed with the desire to study small, medium and large organizations throughout the country. For this study, only career organizations were used. A small department served a population base of less than 100,000, medium 100,000 to 250,000 and a large department served more than 250,000 people.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It is assumed that all respondents would answer the questionnaire honestly and to the best of their ability. Some questions were not completely understood by a small minority of respondents and when this occurred their responses were withheld from the analysis. A limiting factor of the survey was the use of career departments only.

### **RESULTS**

This survey was created to determine if the fire service is using cooperative labor/management techniques and if so, what areas of management are using this style. It was also used to determine if there are any trends in implementing this style of management based on department size or location. Appendix 1 is a copy of the instrument used and Appendix 2 is a graphical presentation of the results.

A total of 120 departments were sent an initial survey. The respondents were asked to return the completed survey via fax transmission. This resulted in a return rate of 36%. This was determined to not be a large enough sampling to study. A second request was sent to the departments that did not respond the first time. This request included a self addressed stamped envelope. The combined results provided 77 returned and usable surveys which equaled a 64% return rate.

The first question asked was used to determine how the departments perceived their own

current management style as either democratic or autocratic. The result was 25 (32%) used an autocratic style as compared to 45 (58%) who were democratic in their belief. Seven (9%) departments stated that they used both styles. Further examination showed that autocratic style was predominantly used in the Northeast (40%) and the Midwest (32%) areas of the country. Department size was not a factor in who used this style. Use of a democratic style was even throughout the country and by department size.

### STYLE OF MANAGEMENT

<u>Style</u>	<u>Area of the Country</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>Midwest</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>		
<b>Autocratic</b>	10	8	3	4		25
<b>Democratic</b>	14	9	12	10		45
<b>Both</b>	3	2	1	1		7

The next two questions attempted to establish the environment that these organizations work under, were there unions and was binding arbitration a requirement. Union representation was present in 71 (92%) of the departments. The International Association of Fire Fighters represented all but two of those unions. The binding arbitration question was divided evenly with 39 required to use it and 38 not required. Larger departments in all areas of the country are where binding arbitration was found to be most prevalent. The South had the highest non-use while the department size had no correlation.

### BINDING ARBITRATION

	<u>Department Size</u>			Total
	Large	Medium	Small	
<b>Use</b>	18	12	9	39
<b>Not Used</b>	14	12	12	38

Question number four asked whether cooperative labor/management teams were used. One or more teams were used by 60 (78%) departments responding while 17 (22%) reported not using teams at all. There was no obvious difference between department size and area of country when that was considered while examining the use of teams. To further examine this data a comparison of use and non-use of teams was correlated with management style. Of the departments who used an autocratic style of management 15 (62%) functioned with teams. Where organizations employing a democratic style 39 (87%) used teams. There were six departments that reported use of only one team, which was safety.

To properly analyze voluntary cooperative labor/management for this paper these responses must be considered as not using teams, because safety committees are required by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and by most unions. Using this rationale, the number of departments using teams reduces to 54 (70%) as the number not using teams increases to 23 (30%).

<u>Style</u>	<b>USE OF TEAMS BY MANAGEMENT STYLE</b>	
	<u>TEAMS</u>	<u>NO TEAMS</u>
<b>Autocratic</b>	15	10
<b>Democratic</b>	39	6
<b>Both</b>	6	1

The next two questions were for the departments using teams. They inquired in what areas of management were teams used and for how long have they been used. As an average, departments had working committees covering an average of 5.5 management topics. The areas that had the most participatory management were Safety, Communications, Standard Operating Procedures, Rules and Regulations, Contract Issues, Training, and Discipline. The average number of years that teams were in use was eight. Other areas where teams are used Testing, Operations, Logistics and Purchasing, Customer Service, Public Information, Administration, Diversity, EMS, Fair Practices, and Physical Fitness. These areas had smaller numbers of participants and averaged two years of experience.

Question seven was asked to determine if responding fire agencies were aware of other city departments using cooperative labor/management. There were 29 (38%) that were aware of teams being used, 24 (31%) said no teams were being used and 24 (31%) were unsure. To further examine this data, a comparison between departments that do not use teams and other departments in the same towns that do use teams revealed that 34% of those cities had teams established in other agencies.

The eighth question asked if a department was not using teams, were they planning on

implementing the use of them in the future. Of the 17 not using teams 10 (59%) were not planning on implementing teams, 5 (29%) thought they might in the future while 2 (11%) were unsure. Half of the organizations not planning on implementing teams in the future were categorized as small departments.

The last of the survey was used to set the demographics of each responding agency.

## **DISCUSSION**

The literature review and survey results have provided interesting information on cooperative labor/management. In the reading it was shown that this style of management consists of open communication, participatory management from the bottom to the top of the organization, managers must learn to let go and become coaches, not commanders. There needs to be more concern for both the employees and the end product and that the process must address the results through constantly striving to improve. The relationship between everyone in the process leads to crossing old boundaries with helping each other being the norm; not building walls and hiding.

It was also learned that this system has worked in the private sector for many years. It was best demonstrated through the adoption of Total Quality Management, then refined to forms that we see used today. Public sector organizations found difficulty understanding this concept when trying to relate it to service delivery and not production. The push by President Clinton's administration for reinventing

government forced private sector organizations to take a second look at this management style.

Additionally, budget cuts and financial constraints that were placed on governmental agencies in the early 1990s enforced the theory that there was a better way to deliver services.

It was the general public workers and national educators that first grasped the concept of cooperatively working to improve the end result. AFSCME members were forced to compete against the threat of privatization to keep their jobs. With this threat looming over their future, they, together with their managers, teamed up to reanalyze how they were providing services. They involved everyone from the bottom up, increasing their knowledge pool from just those managers and supervisors to include the people performing the work. This team work produced more efficient service delivery taking in the needs of internal and external customers while constantly improving the end product. The result was leaner, more efficient government service that was not as attractive to private providers.

The survey demonstrated that the fire service is starting to consider using cooperative labor/management. Traditionally both the fire and police services have not been affected the same as general employee unions. They have been protected by the veil of public safety and a necessity to maintain their organizations for fear of what may happen if they were reduced. This philosophy is rapidly losing its strength as fire prevention and improved codes reduce the hazard from fire and the big fires that always fueled the perceived fears become less in numbers. The homogenous environments that police and fires have lived in called for less change, today's public cries for doing more with less is changing that environment.

Fire departments are understanding that the time for change is now. Eighty-seven percent of the departments report that they are now, or will be in the future, using teams as part of their management philosophies. Although many that are using teams are using them in only a few areas of management, five. There are at least eighteen categories that teams could be used in a cooperative environment. Those who are using teams have been doing it for an average of eight years. The study shows that there is still room for growth. Thirty-two percent of respondents consider their organizations management style to be autocratic. There could be different definitions of autocratic as demonstrated by the high number of autocratic managers using teams, sixty-two percent. Additionally, there were fifteen democratic organizations that reported not using teams. There is room for interpretation as to a full understanding of the styles and use of teams. If teams are not used in a majority of organizational areas than there still is the perception that many departments operate without full participation of all members from bottom to top. Organizations that are not using teams have the chance of seeing the issue forced on them as the survey demonstrated that thirty-four percent of these organizations have agencies in their town or city using cooperative management teams.

Results of successfully implemented labor/management teams have found many benefits arising out of these unions. Employees have been given the opportunity to become participatory in their job design. They now have a say in how a product or service is delivered. Employee satisfaction is part of the equation when developing a strategy to make an organization successful. People are treated as a person and a vital component of a team. Success of the team is dependent on its members, they understand that and work together with management to assure success. Everyone involved grows into

an all for one attitude and there is less individualism as the need for everyone to succeed becomes a dominate force.

It is apparent that the fire service is not sitting and waiting to be forced to find a different way of managing their departments. The study results were surprising in that there were such high percentages of democratic managed organizations and that there are teams being used in small, medium and large departments throughout the country. The number of management areas using teams is low, which indicates that many organizations are either not sure of the concept or are slow developing full team management. This is the area that will need time to grow. Beliefs of both the managers and line personnel will take time to change. This type of change is not without apprehension. It is not comfortable to be told what to do and when to do it. It is not comfortable to take a leadership role and help make those decisions. Given time and the understanding that this style works and can make for constant improvement of service delivery, all employees will find a role that they are content with.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Private and public sector organizations have been successful at implementing cooperative labor/management teams. To make public service more responsive to customer needs, this form of managing has demonstrated its value. Many fire service organizations have started to use this style of leadership. They appear to be moving away from a strict top down management versus labor

mentalities which lead to strong adversarial relationships.

This paper points out the successes that can be achieved through cooperative labor/management partnerships. It is time that the fire service as a whole takes a long look at this form of organizational leadership. The survey did show that there is interest in this form but it was evident that only a portion of the managerial areas or topics are using teams to construct the future. There needs to be a move away from the adversarial relationship between the fire fighter's unions and department leaders. The leaders of the future should come from both sides of the organization with no divisions. If the walls that were built in the past remain in place that organization is sure to find itself considered as non customer friendly and a burden to the tax payers who support it.

The benefits to the public--the customers-- are also benefits to the employees. Implementing partnerships will increase commitment to achieving the agency's mission that will lead to improved customer service, efficient productivity and a higher quality work product. These are the qualities that the customers deserve.

Time, patience, and trust are essential to making a partnership work. The fire service must take a page out of the book of other general public employee unions and implement cooperative labor/management teams. If a fire department is not using teams to manage more than eight subject areas, such as, operations, administration, training, testing, communications, etc., than they are not properly employing their most valuable asset, their entire workforce.

Today's leaders must take advantage of every tool they have to be competitive in the environment in which they serve. The fire service has not had a history of needing to be aggressive and assertive which is changing. As fire agencies expand their scope of service, they develop new arenas of competition; to be successful in these endeavors a company must develop a better way of doing what they do.

Employing labor/management partnerships provides additional valuable resources to strengthen an organization's effort keeping them competitive.

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**APPENDIX - A**

**COOPERATIVE LABOR/MANAGEMENT SURVEY**

1. In your opinion what type of organizational management/leadership style is used by your fire agency for non-emergency managerial operations?

Autocratic

Democratic

2. Do you have a union or organization representing employees?

YES

NO

If yes, what organization represents the employees? (IAFF, FMBA, etc.)

---

3. Is your organization subjected to binding arbitration?

YES

NO

4. Does your organization have cooperative labor/management committees/teams?

YES

NO

UNSURE

5. If yes, what areas do these committees address? (circle all that apply)

Safety

Operations

Administration

Communications

Rules & Regulations

Scheduling

SOPs

Training

Logistics/Purchasing

Discipline

Testing

Customer Service

Public Information

Contract Issues/Labor Relations

6. If you are using cooperative labor/management committees, how long have they been active?  
(list the number of years)

Safety _____	Operations _____	Administration _____
Communications _____	Rules & Regulations _____	Scheduling _____
SOPs _____	Training _____	Logistics _____
Discipline _____	Testing _____	Customer Service _____
Public Information _____	Contract Issues/Labor Relations _____	

7. Are you aware of any other organizations (in your city or area) using cooperative labor/management teams? (Ie. Public Works, PD etc.)

YES NO UNSURE

If yes, what groups are involved? \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you are not using cooperative labor/management teams, do you envision any teams being created in the near future?

YES NO UNSURE

9. Department Information

Name of Department \_\_\_\_\_

Population Served \_\_\_\_\_ Number of uniformed personnel \_\_\_\_\_,

Number of companies:

Engines \_\_\_\_\_, Aerials \_\_\_\_\_, Rescues \_\_\_\_\_, Ambulances \_\_\_\_\_.

Total number of Alarms in 1996 \_\_\_\_\_.

Type of organization, (circle one) Career, Combination, Volunteer,

Name of person completing survey \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a copy of the results of this survey, complete the following lines:

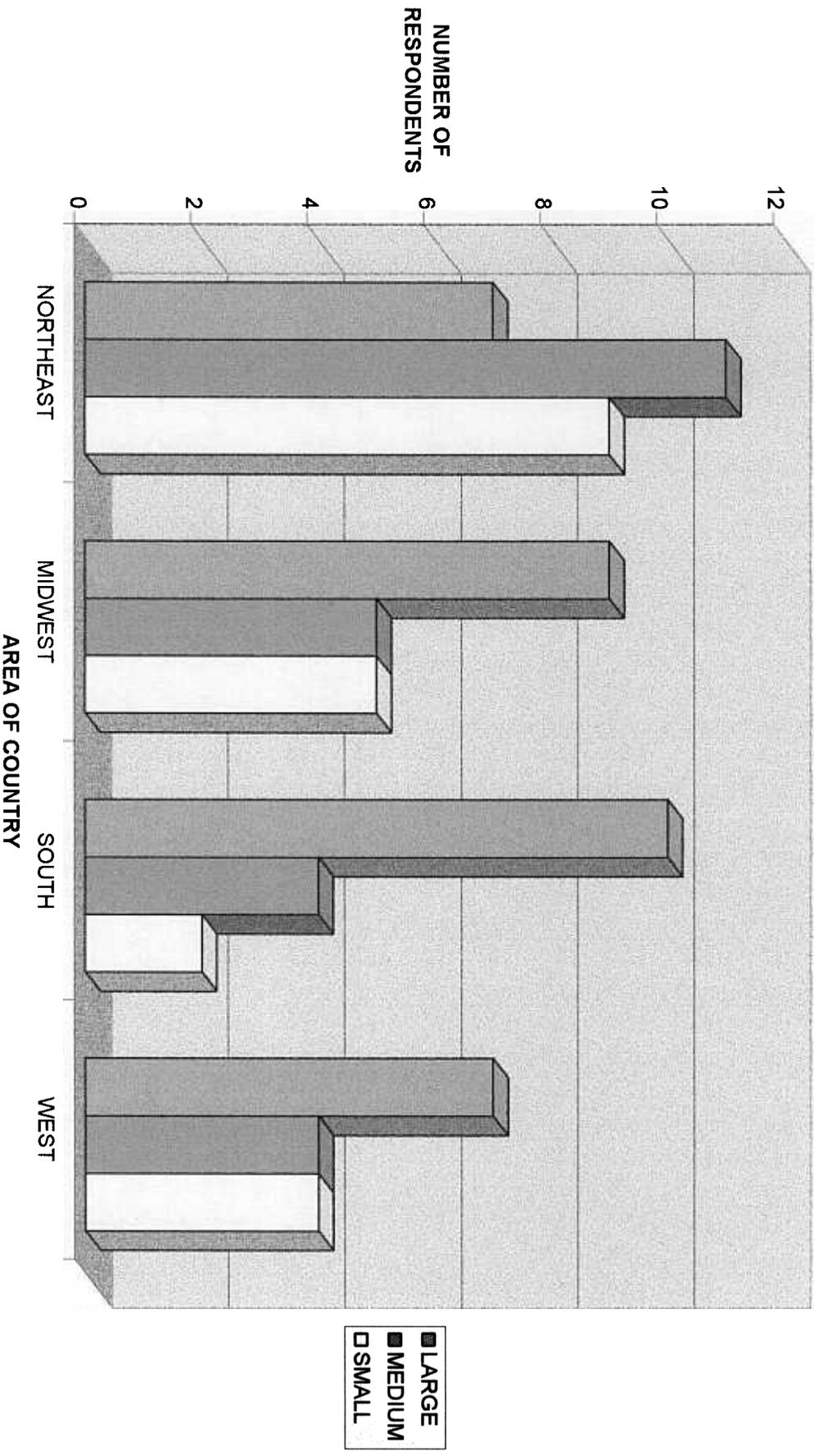
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

OR

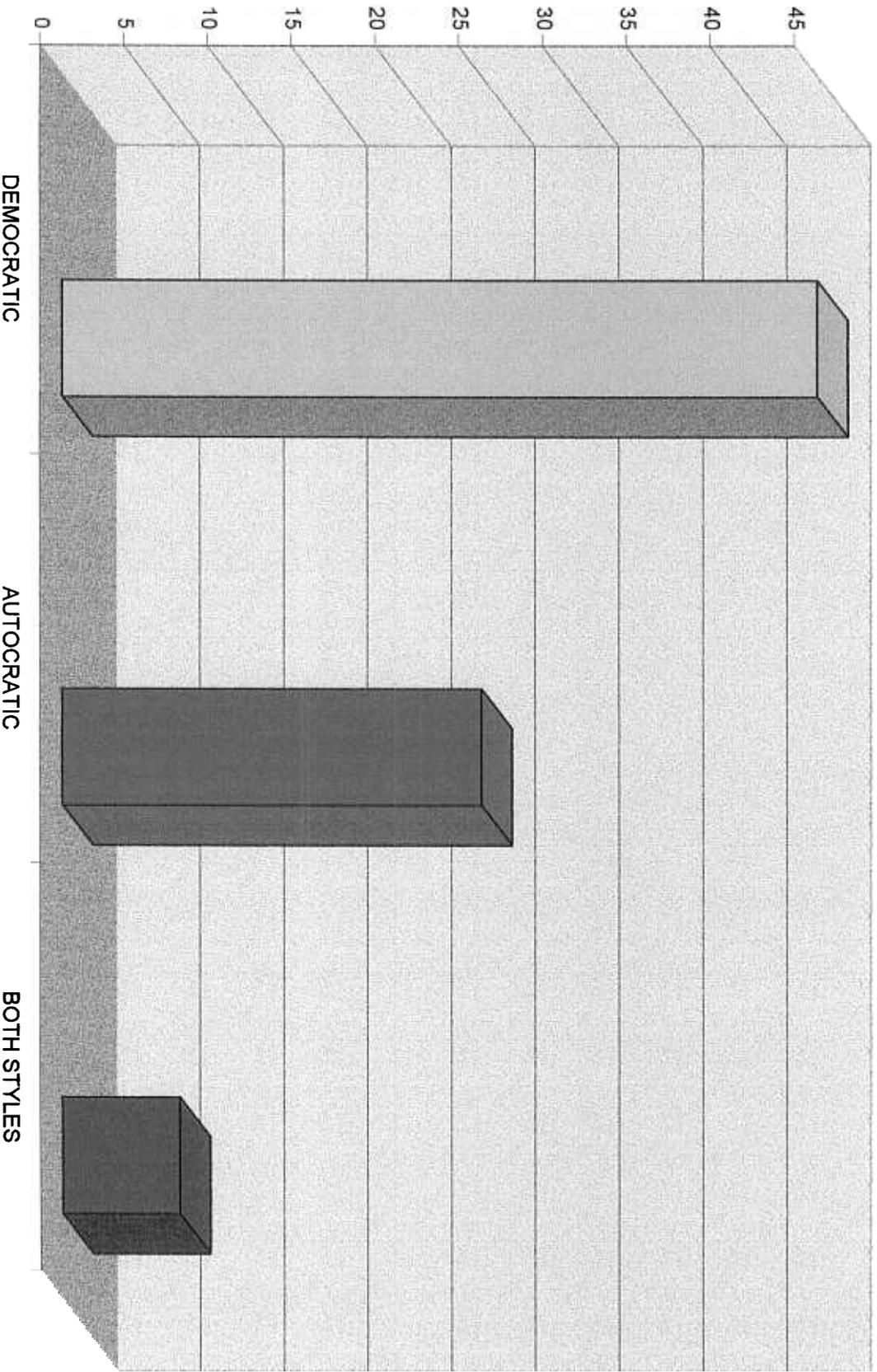
Fax Number \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX - B**

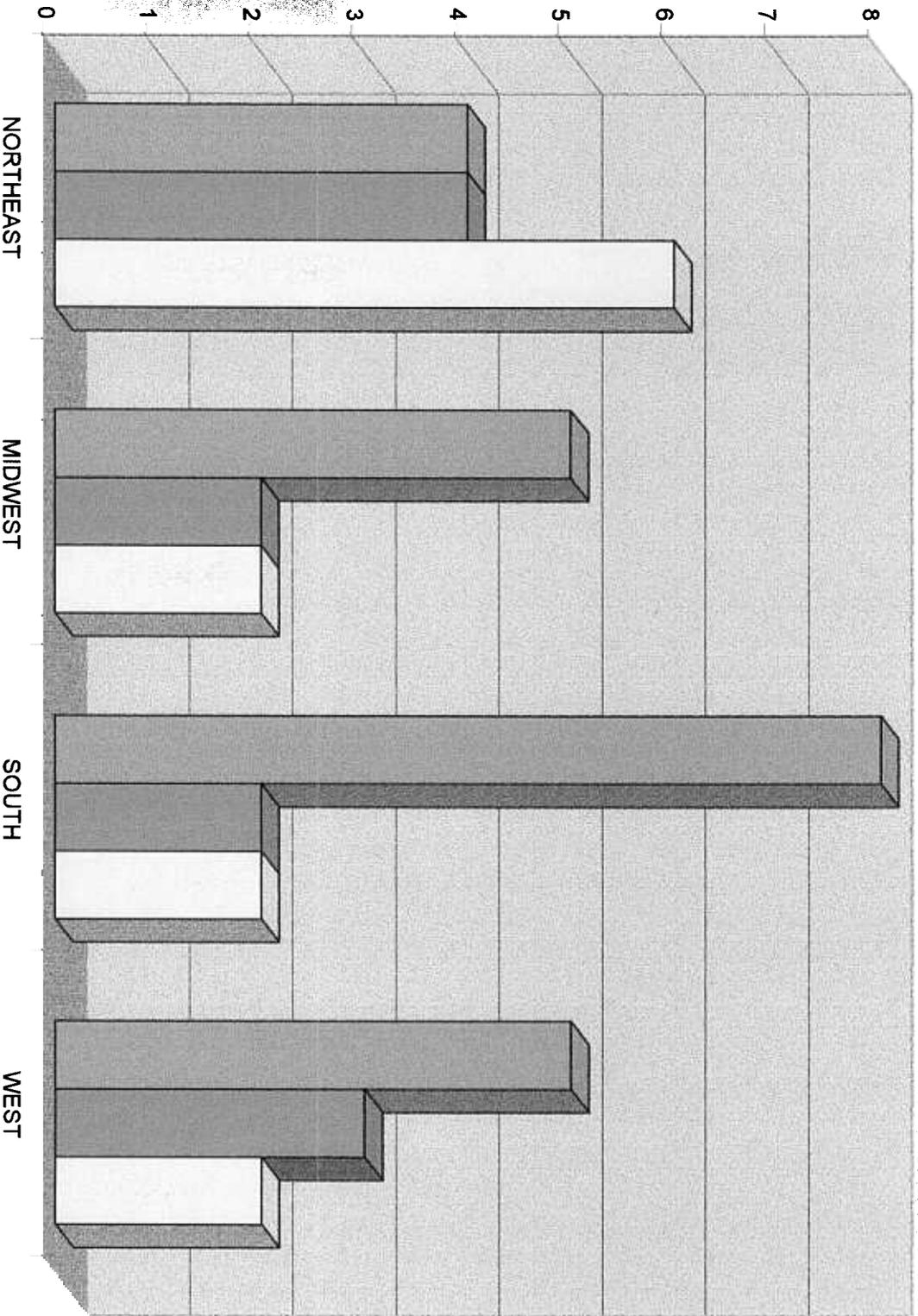
# RESPONSE TO SURVEY BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



# MANAGEMENT STYLE



# DEMOCRATIC STYLE BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



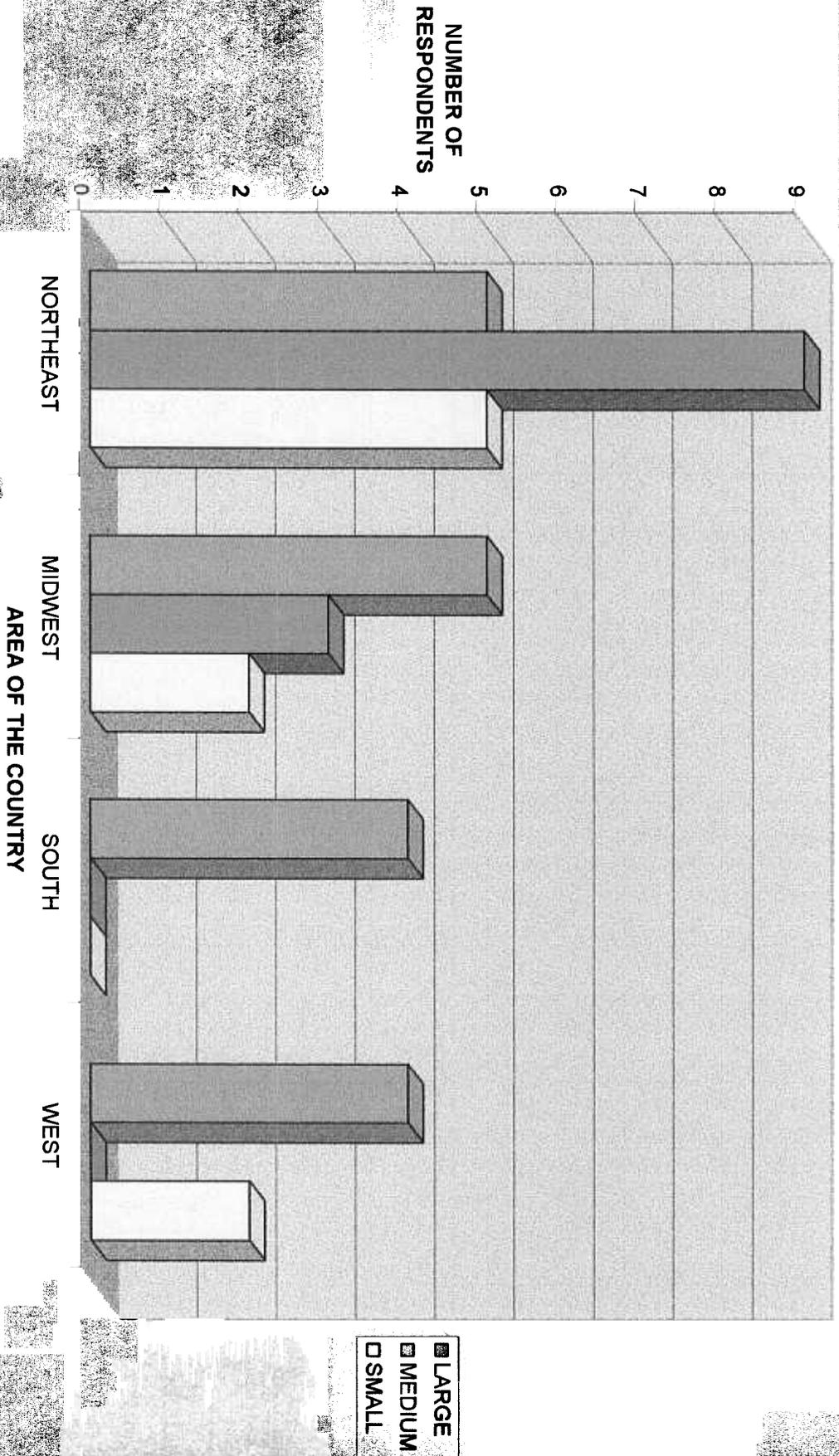
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■ MEDIUM  
□ SMALL

# AUTOCRATIC STYLE BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



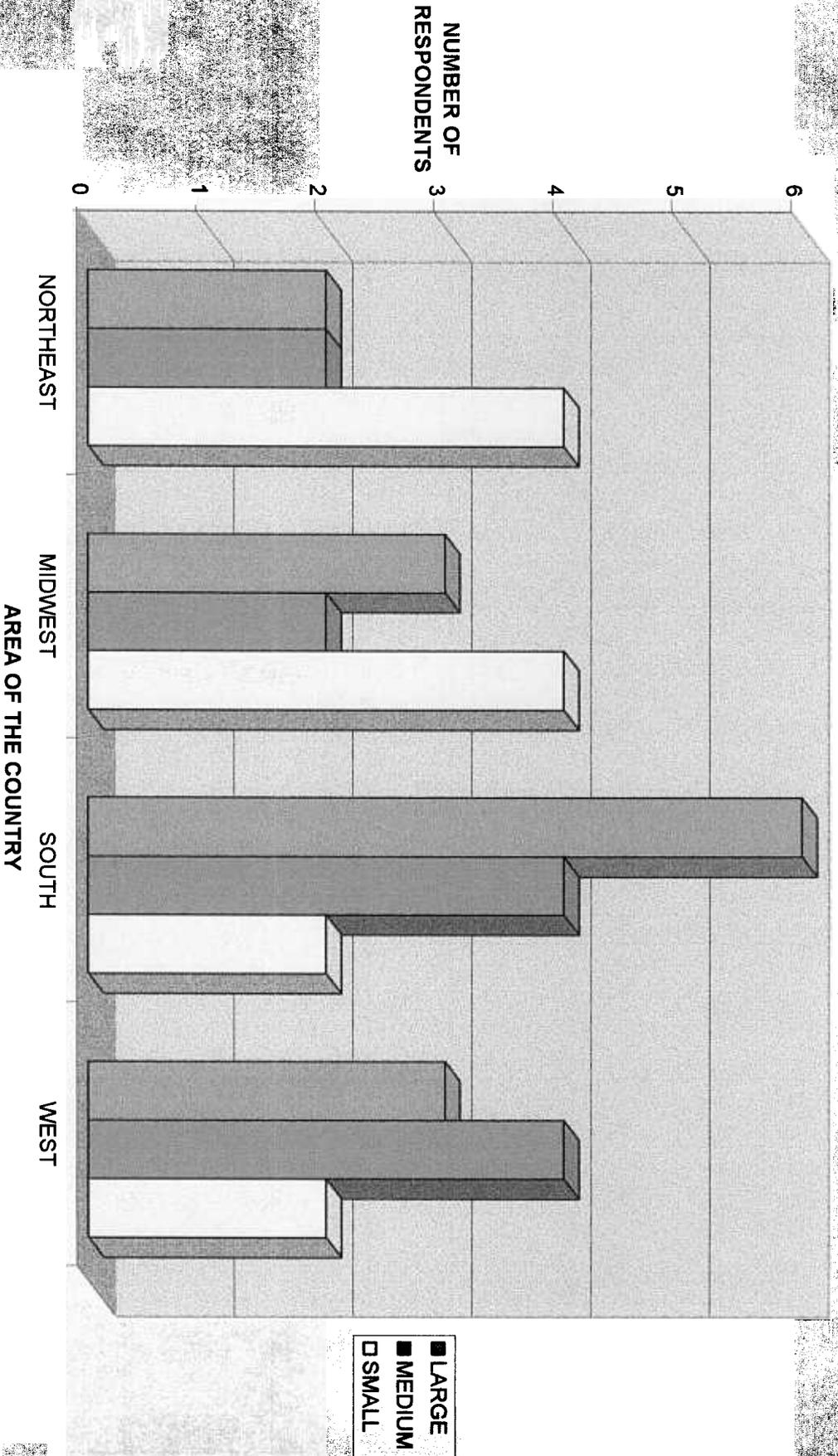
- LARGE
- MEDIUM
- SMALL

# USE OF BINDING ARBITRATION



**LARGE**  
**MEDIUM**  
**SMALL**

# NOT USING BINDING ARBITRATION

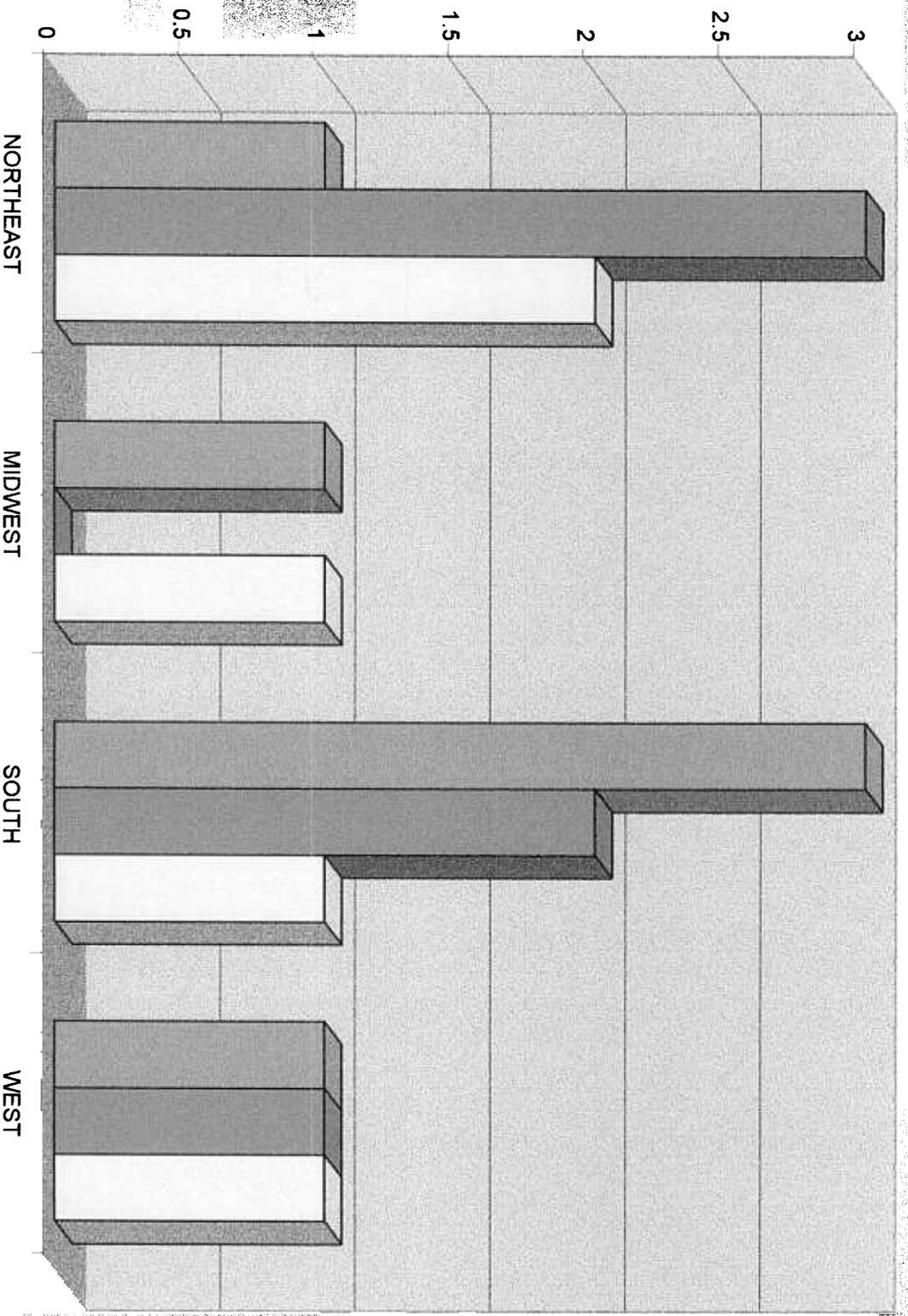


# USE OF TEAMS BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



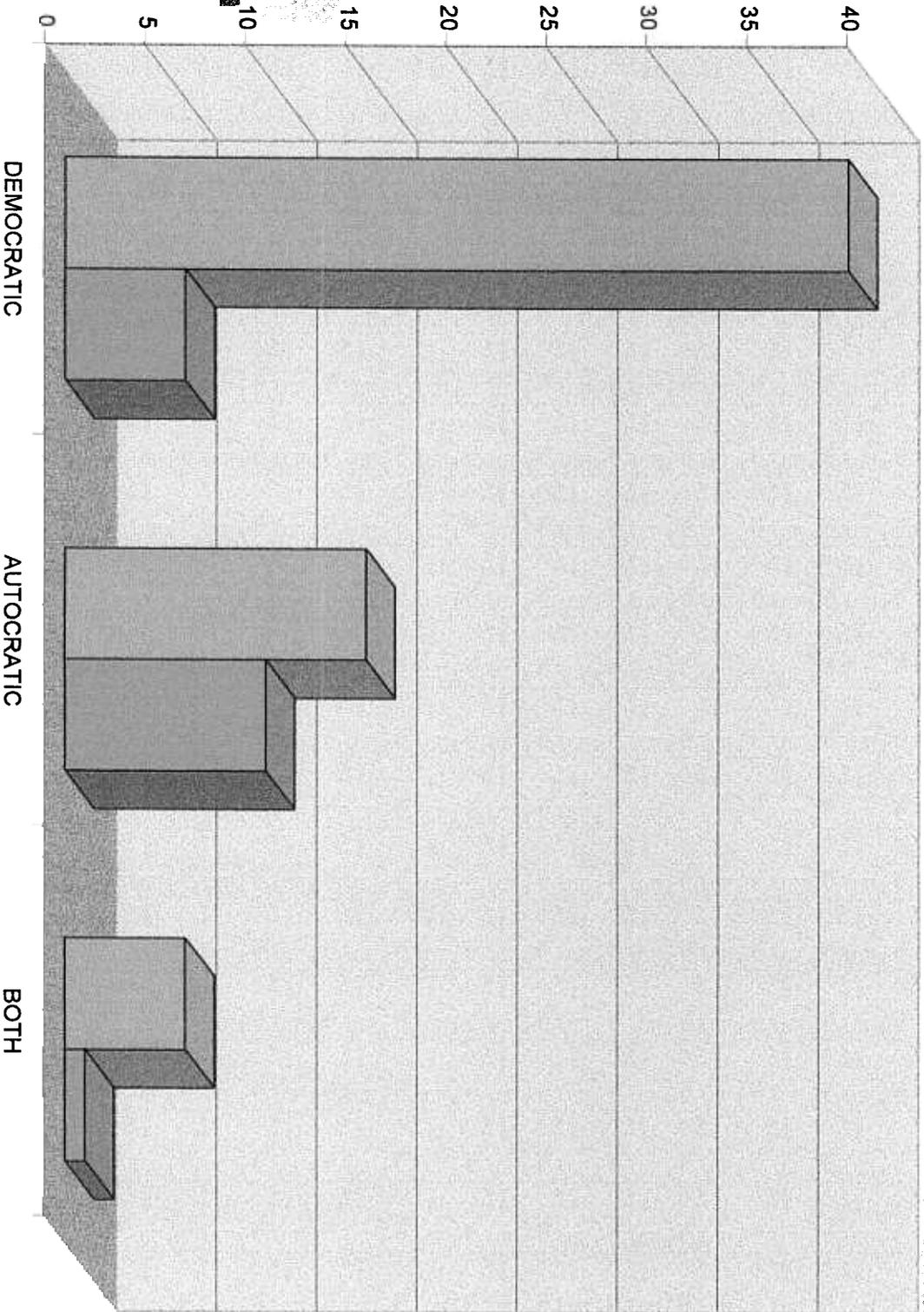
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■ MEDIUM  
□ SMALL

# NO USE OF TEAMS BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



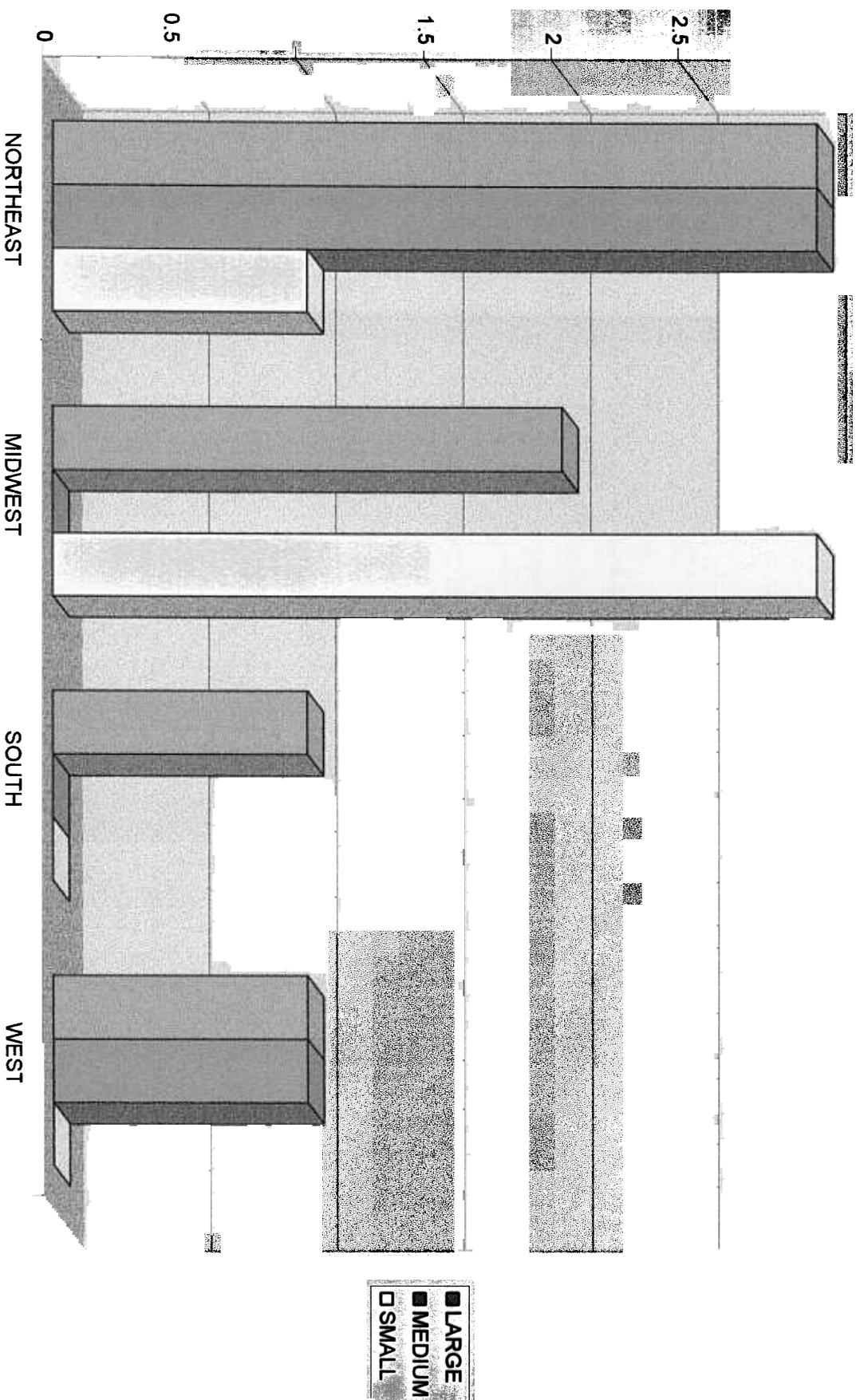
■ LARGE  
■ MEDIUM  
□ SMALL

# USE OF TEAMS CORRELATED TO MANAGEMENT STYLE

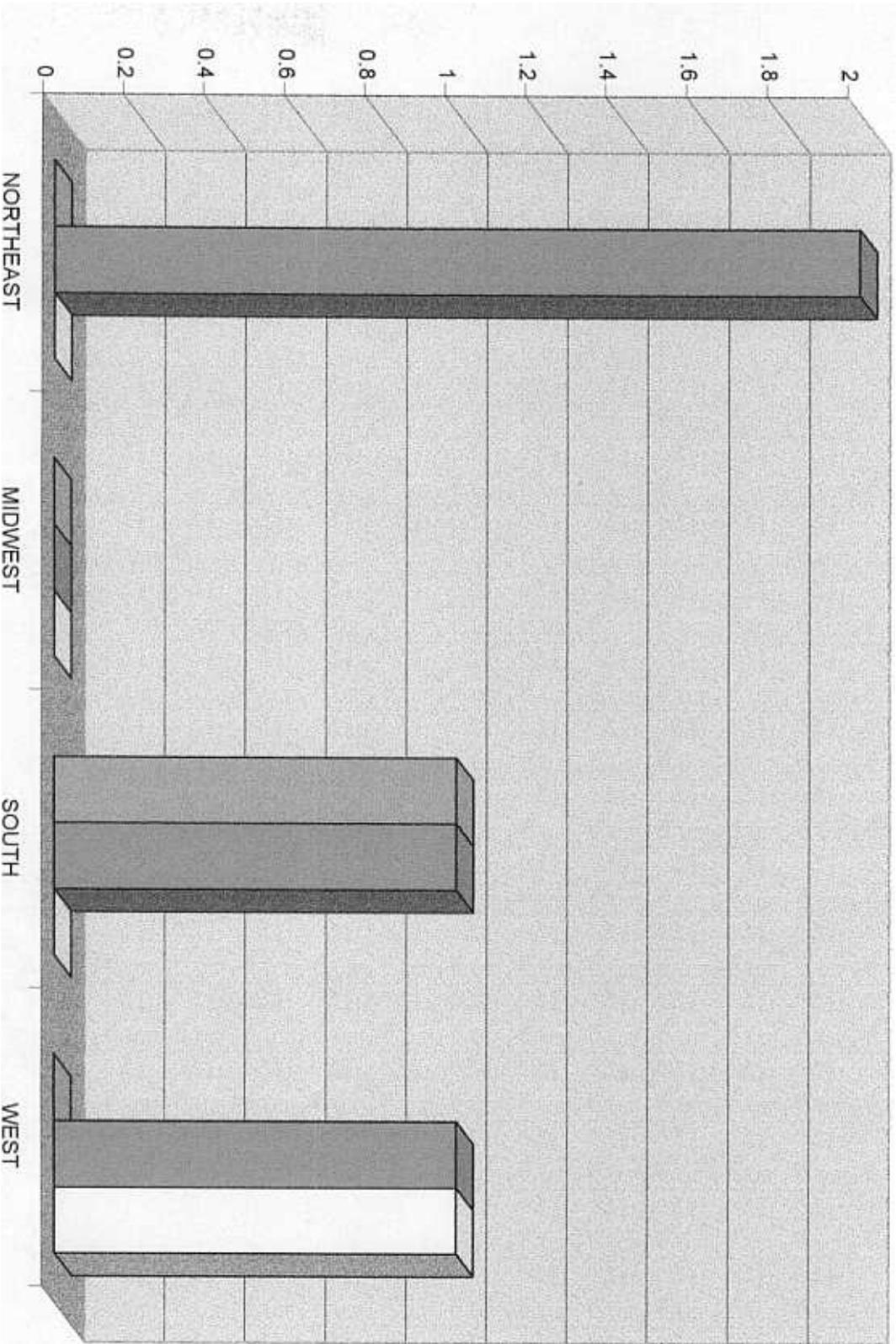


■ TEAMS  
■ NO TEAMS

# AUTOCRATIC STYLE USING TEAMS BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



# DEMOCRATIC STYLE NOT USING TEAMS BY AREA OF COUNTRY AND SIZE



■ LARGE  
■ MEDIUM  
□ SMALL

